

## RCPC SAVE THE DATE April 15: Annual Board Meeting & Election

On Thursday, April 15, 2021, from 7-9 pm, the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC) will hold its Annual Meeting, including the election of six (6) candidates to fill seats on the Board of Directors for terms ending in 2023. The meeting will take place at the Rockridge BART parking lot by the intersection of Forest Street and Shafter Avenue, in an area that will be cordoned off from cars. **Candidate Statements can be found on Pages 3 & 4 of this issue.**

For the health of our community, the meeting will be held out-of-doors, with hygiene protocols including physical distancing and facemasks. Hand sanitizers will be available in dispensers. For safety and to avoid crowding, the scheduled business will be limited to the call-to-order, preliminary

announcements, and voting. All voting will be by written ballot. Residents are welcome to use their own pens. Disposable pens will also be provided.

Any person with principal residence in the area of the City of Oakland contained within RCPC boundaries (see [www.rockridge.org/boundaries](http://www.rockridge.org/boundaries)), and who is at least 18 years old, is eligible to vote in the election. Voter identity and eligibility will be confirmed at the time of voting by photo ID and proof of residency. A current driver's license or California ID card can fulfill both requirements if the listed address is within the boundaries. A full list of acceptable documents is available at [www.rockridge.org/elections](http://www.rockridge.org/elections).

Residents who cannot attend on Thursday, April 15, will have an additional opportunity to vote on **Saturday, April 17, between 4pm and 7pm**, in the Rockridge Library parking lot at 5366 College Avenue. All activities will be out-of-doors and will follow the health protocols described above. ■

## Candidates' Forum: April 8

Hear from RCPC Board candidates and pose questions in a Candidates' Forum, on Thursday, April 8, from 7-9pm, via Zoom (*see Candidate Statements on pages 3 & 4*).

Register for the forum at <http://bit.ly/RCPC2021CF>. A video of the forum will be posted on YouTube at [bit.ly/RCPCYouTube](http://bit.ly/RCPCYouTube). ■

## A Little School That's Big on Community

by Skip Fogarty



Holly Gold at her school's College Avenue location, founded in 2004.

Sixteen years ago, we were looking for a preschool situation for our daughter. That's when we spotted a sign in front of the College Avenue Presbyterian Church. "Rockridge Little School. Opening Soon. Taking Applications."

In the years since, owner Holly Gold gradually expanded the operation to three campuses serving 100 families, but the pandemic forced her to adapt and downsize.

"At first, we had no idea how long



The pandemic was a catalyst for Bekah Cotter and Simeon Duong, pictured with their dog Zoey, to buy their first home.

## Rockridge Home Sales Rocket During Pandemic

by Judith Doner Berne

Despite the Covid pandemic, or maybe partly because of it, for the first time in the nearly ten years I have lived in Rockridge two houses were up for sale at the same time on my block in January. One was a 2,680-square-foot house built on the grounds of a teardown, with only the original fireplace remaining.

Eyes on Rockridge, see page 12

RLS, see page 14

**RCPC News:**

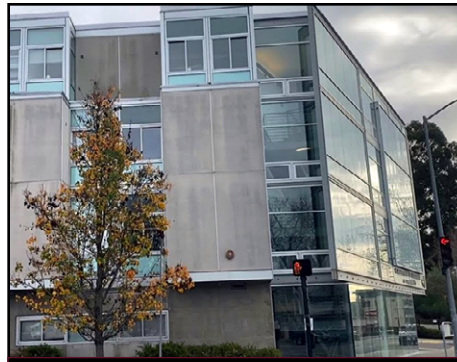
# Let's Welcome Our New Rockridge Neighbors

by Casey Farmer,  
RCPC Co-Secretary

**T**his past December, the City of Oakland announced that it had purchased Clifton Hall to utilize as affordable, transitional housing. The building, at the corner of Broadway and Clifton, is a former dormitory for the California College of the Arts. Governor Newsom's "Project Homekey," through California's Department of Housing and Community Development, made funding for this possible.

At the announcement of this housing partnership, Oakland City Councilmember and Rockridge representative Dan Kalb said "I'm thrilled that dozens of our unhoused families and seniors will have housing thanks to the hard work of Oakland City Staff and our nonprofit partners. There continues to be a dire need for more affordable housing, and I'm committed to making that a top priority for North Oakland and our entire city in 2021."

The property will be home to two types of housing units operated by two very reputable providers. East Oakland Community Project began managing the transitional shelter for 20 families this past December.



**Clifton Hall now provides affordable housing for seniors and families.**

Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA) will operate 40 units of permanent housing for senior citizens who previously experienced homelessness; they are scheduled to move in later this spring. The building's ground floor will house the offices of Family Front Door which serves as the hub for the Coordinated Entry System for homeless families in Northern Alameda County.

The pandemic precludes hosting our new neighbors with a proper block party, so to welcome them, Rockridge Community Planning Council invites all interested neighbors to pitch in for a welcome gift. At the suggestion of SAHA management, RCPC will be purchasing dishes and utensils for the two shared kitchens in the building, and will match all donations made, up to \$600, through our Community Grants Program Fund.

To make a donation of any amount on our GoFundMe Page, visit <https://bit.ly/2QIRhw0>. ■

## THE RockridgeNews

The Rockridge News was founded March 1986 by Don Kinkad, and is published monthly (except August). It is sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council (RCPC), a nonprofit public benefit organization founded to: preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood; promote the health, safety and quality of life of its residents; furnish a forum for community involvement; and provide leadership and representation of neighborhood interests.

### Rockridge News Production

Anna L. Marks ..... Editor & Layout Artist  
Jo Ellis ..... Assistant Editor & Ad Manager  
Susan Montauk ..... Business Manager  
Judith Doner Berne ..... Eyes on Rockridge

### RCPC Board of Directors, 2020-21

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Casey Farmer ..... Co-Secretary  
Michelle Boyd ..... Co-Secretary  
Ronnie Spitzer ..... Treasurer  
David Garcia, Stuart Flashman, Annette Floystrup,  
Matt Levy, Eric Lombardo, Andrew Masalin, Kirk Peterson

Contact the board: [chair@rockridge.org](mailto:chair@rockridge.org)  
For information: [info@rockridge.org](mailto:info@rockridge.org)

### Contacting The Rockridge News

Are there community issues you'd like to see covered in *The Rockridge News*? Have questions about newsletter distribution? Want to volunteer to be a *Rockridge News* block captain? Want to write a letter to the Editor?

Articles submitted for consideration should be emailed to the editor. All submissions are limited to 600 words max (300 words for letters), and must include the author's name, email address, and city or neighborhood of residence.

All submissions are subject to editing for clarity and brevity. To submit content, or for reprints of an article, contact: [editor@rockridge.org](mailto:editor@rockridge.org).

### Newsletter Subscriptions

To subscribe to *The Rockridge News*, send your check for \$20, payable to RCPC with "Rockridge News" noted on the memo line.

Mail payment to:  
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PO Box 22504, Oakland, 94609

### Display Advertising

Deadline for May 2021 issue: **April 22**

Advertising rates are \$28/column inch. Six-month pre-pay rate available. For display ads, call Jo Ellis at 510-653-3210 (after noon), or email [joellis1@hotmail.com](mailto:joellis1@hotmail.com). Email Susan Montauk at [smontauk@gmail.com](mailto:smontauk@gmail.com) for information regarding classified ads.

*The Rockridge News* reserves the right to refuse any articles, display ads, or classified ads.

Views expressed in articles accepted for publication do not necessarily reflect those of *The Rockridge News*, its editor, or the board of directors of the Rockridge Community Planning Council.

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## ELECTION 2021: RCPC Board Candidates

### Michelle Boyd Dana Street



I am running for re-election to the RCPC Board to continue to help Rockridge grow and thrive. My family has rented on Dana St for six years, and I am proud to bring a renter's perspective to the board. We live on an incredible block and count many of our neighbors as close friends. I now serve as RCPC's Co-Secretary and work with the executive committee to streamline board processes and ensure our activities remain accessible to working parents like myself. I have also helped lead community events, including co-running our recent ADU Town Hall and planning an upcoming celebration of new bike lanes on College. There are important conversations we need to have as a community around housing, change, and inclusivity, and tensions we need to balance as we consider the future of our neighborhood in unprecedented times. I'd be honored to continue to serve Rockridge for another term.

### Stuart Flashman Ocean View



My wife and I have raised our family here since 1992. I've also spent 30 years as a solo attorney doing environmental and land use law. I was appointed to the RCPC Board in 2007, ran in three elections, termed out in 2014, and was elected again in 2017 and 2019. I've chaired RCPC's Land Use Committee since 2008. I ask one more term to complete two important tasks. One is the Rockridge Housing Study. Most Rockridge residents would agree that Rockridge needs more affordable housing. We need a few more months investigating incentives to affordable housing before presenting the final report. The other is a hard look at College Avenue's zoning. That zoning, designed by Rockridge residents, has served us well for almost 50 years. However, times have changed. Should the zoning change too? If so, how? That study has just begun, but should be completed within two years.

### Eric Lombardo Lawton Ave



It is a privilege to serve my neighborhood as an RCPC board member and community advocate since I lucked into moving across Oakland to Rockridge three years ago. I am a nonprofit fundraiser by trade, and my partner and I rent half of a duplex on Lawton. As young renters, we appreciate the neighborhood for all its present charms and benefits, while also being thoughtful about the future so that the neighborhood is affordable, welcoming, and easily accessible. I want to co-create solutions that add more homes across price-levels to ensure our community, schools, parks, and businesses can thrive for years to come. I currently serve as the RCPC Parks Chair and, in this capacity, I host service events and build relationships with the City and stakeholders to ensure our parks are resilient spaces for kids and adults to have positive nature-based experiences. I also helped run the previous RCPC election and bolster our board's internal capacity to function at a high level for our community. I would be honored to serve in these roles, and new roles, for another term.

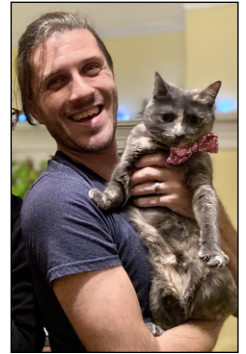
### Andrew Masalin 63rd Street



I joined the RCPC board in 2017 because I wanted to make an impact in the community. I'm excited about the opportunity to continue to do so. My relationship with Rockridge started back in 2005 when my wife and I had one of our very first dates on College Ave. We fell in love with Rockridge...and each other. Ten years later, we bought our first house in Rockridge and are proud parents of an OUSD student. That has deepened our love and commitment to Rockridge. As a parent, I care deeply about the community my children grow up in. My goal as a member of the RCPC board is to continue to help keep Rockridge thriving socially and economically. I want to ensure that College Avenue remains the vibrant, local, and transit-oriented center that it is today. I also want to make sure that all of the residential houses remain diverse and able to keep communities safe. I'm committed to preserving the long-term health and prosperity of this community we call home.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Matt Levy Claremont Ave



Greetings! My cat Buffy and I are seeking to retain my board seat to continue serving our fabulous Rockridge community. My spouse and I have two fur babies and have been fortunate to call Rockridge home since 2018. When not tripping over fake mice, I'm RCPC's Transportation Chair, managing our Safeway settlement agreement to fund traffic mitigation projects. By day, I am a data scientist and project manager, running First Place for Youth's Evaluation & Learning department. There, I drive a culture of data and impact that informs organizational strategy and innovation. At RCPC, I seek to apply that same skillset to benefit our community. I served on the three-member committee organizing RCPC's first-ever pandemic election and am spearheading our transportation efforts, from speed humps to repaving to informing Rockridge about ongoing OakDOT projects. I'm seeking your vote to continue serving you in the two years ahead. Thank you.

## Candidate Statements continued on next page

**RCPC CANDIDATES' FORUM:**  
Thursday, April 8, at 7pm  
(Go to <http://bit.ly/RCPC2021CF>)

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## Candidate Statements continued from previous page

### Jennifer McElrath Rockridge Blvd

My immediate family has lived in Rockridge since 2001, though the family has roots in Oakland dating from the 1850s, a time in which they were pillars of the community. I plan to come full circle by continuing to contribute to the greater good of Rockridge and Oakland. Besides previous volunteer commitments to education and the neighborhood, for the past two years, I have actively led projects for Upper Broadway Advocates to find the balance and style of growth that will remake College Avenue as a destination and continue Rockridge as a distinguishable and desirable place to call "Home." My career as a business executive and entrepreneur, with success across functions, enables me to deeply evaluate and act on short and long-term, multi-variable, multi-constituent projects, such as those facing Rockridge. Enough of the hearsay and unsupported mantras — Rockridge needs facts and a strong community presence in RCPC to influence Oakland officials...NOW.



### Ken Rich Manila Ave

I lived previously in Rockridge and loved the neighborhood so much I was thrilled to move back here in 2019 to a beautiful bungalow on Manila Avenue. The main reason I moved back to Rockridge is that it's the most "neighborhoody" neighborhood I've lived in, and how better to get involved and give back than running for RCPC Board? I have 24 years of professional experience with real estate and city planning issues. I truly believe Rockridge needs to add housing and do its part, and I'm very confident we can do this in a way that makes the neighborhood even better. Our beloved College Avenue needs more nearby residents to keep the businesses afloat, especially after Covid, which has challenged many of our neighborhood shops and restaurants. On housing and other topics, I look forward to bringing my reasonableness, negotiation skills, and passion as an urbanist to this amazing place.



### Diana Mitchell-Chavez Shafter Ave

Rockridge has been my home since 1979 and I love it. It's a neighborhood of diversity, energy, and acceptance. I'm originally from Connecticut and was fortunate to be able to use my degrees in Fine Arts from NYU and Journalism from Columbia to work in Marketing for Cosmopolitan Magazine. I came from New York to California to open, staff, and manage offices in both L.A. and San Francisco. Later, while working as P.A. to a senior partner at Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, I used my computer degree from Berkeley to participate in the design and building of some of San Francisco's great buildings. I have a long history of volunteerism (Glide, Salvation Army) and want to use it effectively to help Rockridge continue to be a place where "everyone wants to live."



### Ronnie Spitzer Kales Ave

I'm a physicist, who moved to Rockridge in 1993 for its walkability and wonderful sense of community. I've worked in industry and national research labs across the Bay Area, and lecture at UC Berkeley. Since my first term on the RCPC Board in 1994, I've been elected numerous times. Rockridge is a wonderful neighborhood that can be even better. I believe the RCPC needs to balance change with maintaining and improving the characteristics of the neighborhood that attracted us to live here. Everyone's voice needs to be heard, for success. During my RCPC board terms, I have interfaced with the city, the community, and Caltrans on numerous Rockridge development projects and transportation improvements. My activities have included: RCPC Treasurer and past Chair; past Transportation Committee Chair; Fourth Bore Coalition Vice-Chair; Halloween Parade organizer; and Kitchen Tour Co-Chair. I hope to continue my service for the neighborhood for another term.



### Ashley Pandya Benvenue

After many months of looking for a home in Rockridge, my husband and I bought our first home on Benvenue in late 2019, just a few months before the birth of our son and the onset of the pandemic. On our many walks through the neighborhood, we've been inspired by the creative ways in which our neighbors show support for frontline workers, teachers, and local restaurants. As we move towards resuming regular life, I believe we can reinvigorate our community through increased housing, public green space, and local business growth. I work in construction technology and have bounced between the private and nonprofit sectors throughout my career. In recent years, I've volunteered as a tax assistant for low-income communities and as a design advisor for emergency housing assistance programs. I look forward to fusing my private sector experience with my appreciation for the complexities of public policy design on the RCPC board.



### Myrna Walton Rockridge Blvd

Rockridge was my first home when I came to California in the 1960s. I returned in 2018 to live in an ADU next to my family. I love it here. As former Director of HR Information Systems at UC's Office of the President, I defined issues, researched all possible solutions, and advocated the best outcomes. The most important questions are, "who benefits?" and "what are the unintended consequences?" My volunteer work included several terms as President of the California Shakespeare Theater as we overcame daunting environmental, political and financial challenges to survive and grow. The amphitheater we built serves the entire Bay Area. Currently, I volunteer with Upper Broadway Advocates on North Oakland's land use opportunities and assist formerly unhoused residents at Clifton Hall. I endorse human-scale, well-designed, seven-story buildings, minimum 20 percent affordable units and a public park at the CCA site, and revitalization efforts for College Avenue.



Hear the candidates on Thursday,  
April 8, at 7pm:  
Go to <http://bit.ly/RCPC2021CF>



RCPC

**Rockridge Community Planning Council — Land Use Committee**

The April Land Use Committee meeting will be held on **Monday, April 26, at 7:30pm**, via Zoom. Please check the [RCPC Facebook page](#) the week before for details. The meeting is open to the public. Send an email to [landuse@rockridge.org](mailto:landuse@rockridge.org) or call (510) 652-5373 to receive a web link or phone number to attend.

## RCPC Land Use Committee Update — April 2021

by *Stuart Flashman, RCPC Land Use Committee Chair*

*The Land Use Committee held its March meeting on March 22nd via Zoom, with a quorum of members present.*

### CCA Oakland Campus Redevelopment Project

Marc Babsin of the Emerald Fund, along with John Clawson of Equity Community Builders, presented an update on the plans for redeveloping the California College of the Art's (CCA) Oakland campus, located along the east side of Broadway just north of Shops at the Ridge.

Babsin said that plans for the project have not changed significantly from the last presentation to the community, in the Fall of 2020. He emphasized that the developers intend to build a maximum height of eight stories (90 feet). Although a presentation to the Design Review Committee included a 190-foot tower "variant," the developer later decided to remove it from the application (and EIR) "in the interest of working together [with the community] collaboratively."

Questions were once again raised about the project's proposed parking ratio — one parking space for every two units. Some expressed concern about excess cars spilling out onto neighborhood on-street spaces. Babsin said that instituting residential permit parking, with project residents ineligible for permits, could address that concern. Babsin said, however, that he felt the parking would be adequate, given the project's urban setting.

While the project has not changed, Babsin said that economic conditions are even more unfavorable now than they were last fall. Housing and office prices have dropped by as

much as 20 percent, while building costs have held steady, making the project unfinanceable, at least for the moment. Nevertheless, project plans for the largest of the three current options still include ten percent moderate-income units. (The remaining 90 percent would be market rate.) Rather than adopt a historic area-zoning overlay, as originally proposed, the plans now call for establishing permanent design

guidelines for the area. These would apply even if the current project is not built.

### The Future of College Ave. Retail

The chair commented briefly on progress in talking to leaders in other neighborhood business districts in Oakland. The results thus far indicate optimism that local businesses will recover from the pandemic-induced slump. District leaders were generally opposed to loosening zoning for neighborhood commercial (CN-1) districts. Further consultations are planned.

### Frosted Glass Storefronts

At the request of some College Avenue businesses, the committee discussed a recent trend, especially among exercise studios, to block storefront windows with frosted glass so that passers-by wouldn't see the activity inside. Some committee members felt this detracted from

*Land Use, see next page*



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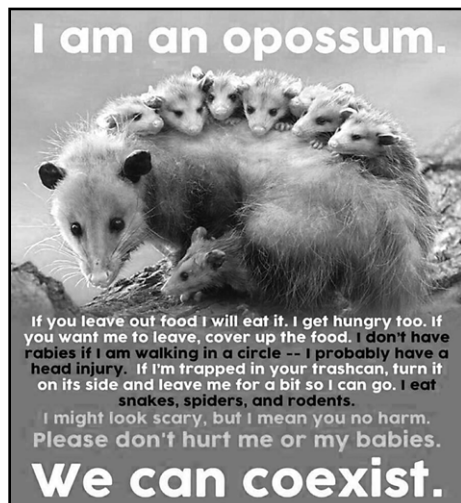
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*Land Use, from previous page*

the attractiveness of the commercial district, as it made the storefronts uninteresting to passing pedestrians. Other members felt that since exercise studios attracted people to the area, it was worth any loss in visual interest.

A motion was made recommending that the Board of Directors write to the Planning Department to express concern that allowing opaque storefronts ran counter to the purpose of CN-1 zoning. The committee voted 5-3 (committee members Farmer, Garcia, and Mehta voting no) to approve the recommendation. ■



## Damaged Sidewalk? In Oakland, Homeowners Must Take Charge

by Michael Rosen

**W**ander down a given Rockridge street, and chances are you'll see a chunk of misaligned concrete, a deep divot, or an entire paving stone jutting upward from one of the neighborhood's sidewalks. These hazards litter the pedestrian routes from Colby to Claremont and beyond; and in most cases, filing a repair ticket won't get you very far. In Oakland, unless the damage was caused by an official City street tree, the responsibility for maintaining and repairing sidewalks is up to adjoining property owners. This has been the rule since July 2019, when the Oakland City Council passed a new sidewalk ordinance.

Before the recent ordinance, property owners in Oakland had a general duty under State law to maintain the safety of sidewalks adjoining their property, but unless they were actively negligent, they were not liable for injuries caused to pedestrians by unsafe conditions. Any liability was borne by the City, as the owner of the sidewalk. Oakland's 2019 ordinance makes the new rule crystal clear: if someone trips on a hazardous stretch of sidewalk, is injured, and then sues, the adjoining property owner can be held at least partly liable.

Ever since a State appeals court ruled in 2004, in the case of *Gonzales v. San Jose*, that a city ordinance can shift liability in trip-and-fall cases to adjoining property owners, California municipalities have gotten busy limiting their exposure. According to Oakland's Department of Transportation (OakDOT), at least 20 cities in the state have enacted such ordinances, including our neighbors in Berkeley and San Francisco.

Oakland joined this club a little less than two years ago. In his report to the City Council at the time, OakDOT director Ryan Russo outlined the logic of the move. In 2018 alone, the City paid out more than \$1.1 million as a result of trip-and-fall

lawsuits. Meanwhile, thousands of sidewalk repair tickets remained outstanding. According to Russo, passing some of the responsibility of sidewalk maintenance to Oakland homeowners would lead to safer streets, especially for residents with disabilities, and a more walkable city.

There is cause to believe the ordinance will succeed in one sense. In the 2019 report, Russo referred to a 2011 City ordinance that made it mandatory to repair one's sewer laterals upon the transfer of title. After the ordinance was passed, applications for sewer lateral repair permits skyrocketed.

"Adjacent property owners are often in the best position to quickly identify and address potentially dangerous sidewalk conditions," Russo wrote. "Without the ordinance, abutting property owners have little incentive to maintain sidewalks or to report or eliminate tripping hazards." (Low-income homeowners, who may find it difficult to carry out sidewalk repairs, can seek assistance from the City, if they are already enrolled in another means-tested program.)

What makes Oakland's ordinance unique is an indemnity provision, which would give the City the right to sue the adjoining property owner to recoup the cost of any damages assessed to the City. This provision could relieve the City of Oakland from "tort liability for any sidewalk injuries," as Jonathan Varnica, a premises liability expert for the San Francisco law firm Vogl, Meredith and Burke, wrote in 2019.

"In a nutshell, Oakland goes beyond just creating a duty for adjacent landowners in which the City would share liability," Varnica told this writer. "It tries to shift all liability off of the City." But whether Oakland's indemnity clause will be upheld by the courts, or be found to conflict with general State law, remains to be seen. ■



## Oscar-Nominated *Crip Camp* Gets Rave Reviews from Rockridge Neighbors



Rockridge residents Neil and Denise Jacobson (pictured above at Sundance) are stars in an Oscar-nominated documentary, *Crip Camp*. The film traces the disability rights movement during the late 1960s with a focus on Camp Jened in upstate New York, a camp for disabled kids that both Neil and Denise attended in their youth.

But that wasn't the first time they met. They first met at a Saturday recreation program for people with disabilities in Manhattan when Neil was just 8 years old. They met again at Camp Jened, and were reunited

decades later by mutual friend and *Crip Camp* star, Judy Heumann, who invited them over for a pot-luck dinner in Berkeley in 1982. A year later they got married and moved to Rockridge where they raised their son, David.

The film premiered at Sundance last year (see *Rockridge News*, May 2020) where it won the Audience Award. It was released on Netflix shortly thereafter. It has now been nominated for an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature...tune in on April 25. ■

**Rockridge News** readers loved it so much that they sent the following responses:

*A huge congratulations to Denise and Neil for the wonderful film! There's a new "Virtual Crip Camp" webinar series that builds on the energy, ambition, and knowledge from Camp Jened, and features disability rights activists. I attended the first one, and it was terrific.*

Sarah Anne Minkin

*Denise, you and Neil should be extremely proud. I'm proud to have heroes like you as my neighbors. I had never heard this story before and I was deeply moved by it. That's the America I want to remember and hope to see again.*

Ron Rowell

*I am so thrilled to live so close to movie stars! I think Neil and Denise should charge for autographs. And when you see this great documentary, you will find that Neil has the best line in the show. Seriously, this work is excellent and tells an important story. Really enjoyed it in so many ways.*

Thomas Vitek

Denise can also be seen on YouTube with a panel of activists:

*"Crip Camp, President Barack Obama Moderates A Conversation on Disability Rights."*

### An Anecdote from Denise

I wanted to share a little tidbit regarding the title. I had a meeting with the filmmakers very early on at the Rockridge Café. When we were bantering back and forth about a title, off-the-cuff, I threw out "Crip Camp." It seemed to stick. A few weeks later, I voiced some reservations, but everyone felt it was a way to take back a piece of a derogatory word and turn it into power by owning it! Stay well all. ■

## NCPC MEETING

The Greater Rockridge NCPC will hold its next meeting on **Thursday, April 8**, at 7pm, via Zoom ([click here for link](https://rockridgencpc.com)). Visit <https://rockridgencpc.com> for additional details.

The February 2021 minutes are available on the NCPC website, at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/y7r5qmbz>

Neighbors are encouraged to attend and participate.



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## Repaving College Avenue: Phase Two Begins

After some delays to other work on the project, the current start date for the pavement slurry seal from Shafter to Alcatraz has now been confirmed for April 26. The work should take several weeks, which includes a week of preparation prior (including temporarily removing parklets) and a week of finish work that includes reinstalling parklets and painting the traffic striping on the pavement. In the meantime, this corner will be open for pedestrian use, with safety barricades around incomplete sidewalks.

Work at the corners of Shafter and College has also begun. The sidewalk, curb and gutter work will take 2-3 weeks to complete. The contractor will distribute 72-hour notices to nearby businesses prior to start of work. ■



## All-Door Boarding on AC Transit

AC Transit is excited to announce the roll-out of a six-month, all-door boarding pilot program on lines 6 and 51B (Rockridge BART to Berkeley Marina). As of last month, Clipper® cardholders are welcome to use rear doors and pay fares by tagging upon boarding. Riders using cash, paper pass, or mobile payment

options should continue to board at the front. It is anticipated that all-door boarding will provide an optimal riding experience by providing faster boarding due to shorter lines; faster service to final destinations; and better social distancing with less crowding at stop areas. For more information, visit: [www.actransit.org](http://www.actransit.org). ■

## Oakland Prohibits Combustion Engine-Powered Leaf Blowers and String Trimmers

Combustion engine-powered leaf blowers and string trimmers are those powered by an internal combustion or rotary engine fueled by gasoline, alcohol, or other volatile liquid. These devices pose significant health hazards to equipment operators and Oakland residents, including the discharge of particulate matter, carbon monoxide, unburned fuel, and ozone depletion.

They also contribute to climate change by emitting carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, and generate significant noise pollution, a paramount

concern for Oakland residents.

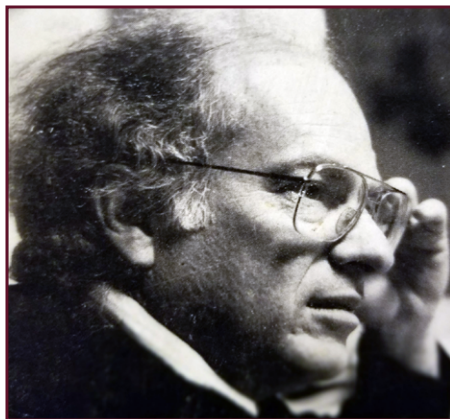
The Oakland City Council unanimously adopted an ordinance in October 2020 prohibiting any person, gardening business, or owner or tenant of property from operating any combustion engine-powered leaf blowers or string trimmers in Oakland in either public or private settings. The City is urging users to replace combustion engine-powered tools with zero-emitting electric and/or non-motorized alternatives. Penalties will be imposed starting this month. ■



**In Memoriam****Rich Yurman**

(Jan 1937 – Dec 2020)

by Claudine Jones



**R**ich grew up in Manhattan and Queens and was delighted to make his home far from those environs. After graduating MIT and Boston U., and leaving the East, teaching creative writing and algebra, he lived in Seattle, Honolulu, and for many years San Francisco and finally retired to Rockridge. When asked the typical question, “so what do you do?” he answered, “I’m a poet.” Many of his poems are firmly rooted in the New York of his childhood, living with his parents and grandparents in Forest Hills. He leaves behind his partner Claudine, loving family, friends, and the *Rockridge News* crew who miss him greatly.

**The Beauty Part**

*Chicken feet  
What the butcher  
should have thrown  
away  
like feathers and  
the heads with beaks*

*Nails, yellow bumpy skin  
and gristle  
a little fat*

*My grandmother  
boiled them  
neatly sucked on the toes*

*‘Don’t be foolish  
Try one’  
she offered  
‘It’s the beauty part’*

**Oakland Schools Spring Back, Slowly**

by Sam Davis, OUSD Vice President and Director, District 1

**I** am very glad the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and the Oakland Education Association (OEA) were able to reach an agreement that will give the majority of students the option to be back in classrooms this spring.

As a result, in-person instruction has begun as of March 30 for our most vulnerable students (such as English language learners, unhoused students, and foster youth) and all students in grades TK through 2nd grade who wish to attend. There will also be an option to remain in distance learning for those families that chose to do so.

On April 19, all students in grades 3 through 6 will also have the option to come back for in-person learning. There are still a lot of details to work out, so unfortunately the number of hours of in-person instruction will likely be limited at first.

However, what we accomplish over

the final two months of the school year should not be seen as predictive of what will happen in the coming fall session, just as the first attempts at distance learning a year ago looked nothing like the structure that online learning has evolved into for this year.

As your new school board director, I am learning every day and making my share of mistakes as I go, but working as hard as I can to learn about the issues, make good decisions, and communicate with the public about these issues.

I urge everyone to approach the process of returning to in-person instruction with patience, cooperation, good humor, and grace. Our children are watching and learning from how we adults handle this crisis, including resolving our strong disagreements, managing setbacks, and embracing new experiences. Let’s work together to make this successful and safe for everybody. ■

**Who Will Be the Next *Rockridge News* Marshal or Block Captain?**by Susan Montauk, *Rockridge News* Business Manager

**M**any of you know Jo and Ken Ellis, our stalwart volunteers who have opened their home the first Friday of each month for the last couple of decades to the volunteers who come to bundle and box the newsletters. If you live in their neighborhood, between Colby and Hillegass, you may also be aware that they have been the Marshals who have delivered bundles to their local Block Captains for a long time.

The time has come for them to pass the torch on to another civic-minded volunteer. That may be you. The Marshals pick up the box at the bundling venue on the weekend of publication and deliver them to ten houses in the Colby/Hillegass neighborhood.

Many thanks to Coley Florance’s teenage boys who have been delivering the paper for the past several years. They are both soon off to college, and Coley and her spouse will be splitting their time between Oakland and Utah. They hope someone from the 5400-5500 block of Lawton, or nearby, will take their place as Block Captain.

**The 10A/Block Captain Route:** The route goes from the apartment building at 5530 College, south to corner of Lawton, up to 5540 Lawton, across the street to 5541 Lawton, every house back down Lawton to College, and around the corner and south down the street to 5488 College (currently, Hello Vintage clothing shop). Call (510) 547-3855 or email Susan at [smontauk@gmail.com](mailto:smontauk@gmail.com) to volunteer. ■

## Rockridge Community Planning Council 2020 Financial Statement

### RCPC General Fund

#### Income

Contributions	\$740
Rockridge News	\$39,140
Kitchen Tour	\$1,300
Interest Income	\$11
Merchandise Sales	\$0

**Total Income** \$41,191

#### Expenses

Rockridge News	\$34,402
Contractors	\$8,544
Insurance, Permits, Sales Tax	\$1,447
Misc Administrative & Program Expenses	\$2,420
Events	\$686

**Total Expenses** \$47,499

**Net Receipts (RCPC)** -\$6,309

### BALANCE SHEET

#### Assets

RCPC Assets, Savings/Checking	\$88,395
Locksley Gardens Assets, Checking	\$746

**Total Assets** \$89,141

#### Equity & Liability

KF Community Improvements Prgm	\$5,618
Legal Fund Reserve	\$55,000
Equity	\$34,832
Net Income	-\$6,309

**Total Equity & Liability** \$89,141

## New Eateries Open on College Avenue

**F**oodie alert — College Avenue welcomes newcomers to the block. Casa Barotti spizzacheria opened in the former Extreme Pizza space at 3204 College near Alcatraz, serving up a selection of pizza-based snacks and drinks. Namastey Patio opened in the former La Boulangerie location at 5500 College. They serve standard Indian fare and have a dog-friendly, outdoor dining space. The former location of Cream, 6300 College, will soon be home to pressed juicery. Lastly, the former Dreyer's ice cream shop will soon be home to Boba Guys milk tea. ■

## Peralta Elementary Online Auction

**T**he annual community event, hosted by the Peralta Parents Teachers Group (PTTG), will be held online on Saturday, April 17, from 3:45 to 5:30pm. The Virtual Auction & Magic Show is open to the public and is free to attend with registration.

For more information and to contribute auction items, visit <https://www.peraltaschool.org/auction>. ■



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## Rockridge Dining Guide

Contact these local restaurants for pickup and delivery — and ask about outdoor dining options.

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A Coté  
Ain't Normal Cafe  
Barney's Gourmet Hamburgers  
Becky's Chinese Restaurant  
Beer Baron  
Belotti Ristorante  
Cactus Taqueria  
Casa Barotti  
Cole Coffee  
Crepevine  
Enoteca Molinari  
Filippo's  
Flavors of India  
Great Wall Chinese  
High Peaks Kitchen  
Holy Basil Pho  
Hudson Bay Cafe  
Ike's Love & Sandwiches  
Khana Peena  
Kitchen Story  
La Farine  
Marica  
Millennium  
Mitama  
Momo Ramen  
Namastey Patio  
Noodle Theory  
Oliveto Restaurant  
Philz Coffee  
Ramen Shop  
RareTea  
Redfield Cider Bar & Bottle Shop  
Rikyu Japanese Restaurant  
Rockridge Cafe  
Smitten Ice Cream  
Soi 4 Bangkok Eatery  
Southie's  
Sukho Thai  
The Burrito Shop  
The Chocolate Dragon  
The Golden Squirrel  
Uzen  
Wood Tavern  
Yimm  
Zachary's Chicago Pizza

## Look Out New York, NYT Says The Best Bagels Are Right Here

If you haven't been following Boichick Bagels on Instagram, you may have missed how the recent *New York Times* article impacted the little Rockridge shop. Once the story broke, customers came from more than 30 miles away to wait well over an hour to learn for themselves if what the article stated is true... that the best bagels are in California. Owner Emily Winston has received a flood of national attention, saying, "It's like the Bagel Judgment of Paris." Get in line early, they stay open until they sell out. ■



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## Eyes on Rockridge, from front page

The other, a 1,094-square foot Craftsman bungalow, was left by its long-time owners in the hands of the real estate agent to update. Within two weeks of being on the market, “Sale Pending” signs were posted in front of both houses, selling for well over their asking prices.

Rockridge home sales data from January 1 through March 17 saw the average sales price shoot up 18 percent to \$2.07 million compared with the same period a year ago, according to the Oakland-Berkeley Association of Realtors. (A house that recently sold for \$5.5 million was not included so as not to skew the average).

“Every agent I know is doing a full sprint right now,” Realtor Maxi Lilley said in mid-February. “Last year in early March (right before the first Covid-19 shutdown) I had three

listings. Now I have seven. “There is just loads of demand.” March, she said, is usually the beginning of the equivalent of retailers’ holiday sales — the high point of the house-hunting season. The weather warms and parents who want children in new schools in time for fall begin looking.

“But Covid has changed people’s relationship to their houses, their jobs,” Lilley said. With so many people working from home, a trend that may well carry over into non-pandemic time, there is a need for more home office space. People are assessing “how many places can you partition off in a house?” And, at least for the present, that includes children who are distance learning.

It’s not just a suburban family profile, she said. Rockridge attracts

young but well-compensated buyers who may or may not have children, middle-aged and single parents, as well as downsizers. The rock-bottom mortgage rates, as well as the passage of Prop 19, give further impetus to both buyers and sellers.

Prop 19, which took full effect as of April 1, may have encouraged some sellers. It allows anyone 55 years or older, or those with severe disabilities, to transfer their tax assessment to another home up to three times over their lifetime, up from the previous one-time only. The tax assessments can now be transferred to more expensive homes, subject to certain limits.

Broker Dan Stea said he has listed more houses this year than in any of the prior four years. A significant percentage of those who purchased his listings “are moving up from within the neighborhood.” They had been renting or had a smaller house. Now working from home, they want more space. As for the sellers, several of his clients have been transferred out of the country – to France, Switzerland, Shanghai, Australia. And three separate families headed to Denver. The ability to work from home “offers a lot more options,” he said.

For the bungalow Stea listed on my block, he had eight offers within the standard 14-day bidding period.

*Eyes on Rockridge, see next page*

**eyes**  
on Rockridge

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### Competition Drives Price in March

Closing date	BR	BA	Address	Original price	List price	DOM	Selling price
3/1/2021	4	1	408 60th St	\$799,000	\$799,000	31	\$1,140,000
3/2/2021	2	2	6413 Hillegass Ave	\$1,595,000	\$1,595,000	5	\$2,200,000
3/3/2021	2	2	5340 Broadway Ter	\$595,000	\$595,000	14	\$691,000
3/8/2021	2	1	5208 Desmond Street	\$1,098,000	\$1,098,000	3	\$1,345,000
3/12/2021	4	2.5	6429 Regent St	\$2,950,000	\$2,950,000	13	\$3,200,000
3/15/2021	3	2	397 61st St	\$1,395,000	\$1,395,000	8	\$1,667,000

*Homes sold in March closed 21.5% over the asking price on average.*

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**Eyes on Rockridge, from previous page**

But essentially gone are the “love letters” designed to woo the seller with an emotional plea. The real estate industry now frowns on that, he said, thinking that it can be seen as discriminatory.

A desire for more space, “wonderfully low” interest rates, and access to their workplaces is what drew Bekah Cotter and Simeon Duong to buy their newly constructed house in Rockridge. During the lockdown, Duong moved into the Castro Valley apartment Cotter shared with three of her fellow nurses. “My home office situation was 4 or 5 feet from the bed,” the Pinterest product manager said, which became somewhat old. “We were spending so much time at home,” Cotter added.

Duong called house hunting during the pandemic “a very interesting experience.” At one point, they were among 24 buyers vying for one property. Already familiar with the area, Cotter graduated from U.C. Berkeley and is a neonatal intensive care nurse at Alta Bates Summit in Berkeley. Duong used to house sit “for colleagues who live on Shafter.”

“This neighborhood has the right intersection of convenient commuting, walk-to commerce, and great restaurants,” Duong said. Plus, “I really like the people.”

For buyers, such as Cotter and Duong, “this walking thing” continues to be a huge selling point for

Rockridge, even if access to BART and the casual carpool, at least temporarily, “have lost their shine,” said broker Ron Kriss of Lawton Associates.

Pre-Covid, houses were mostly staged to show the third bedroom as a children’s room, Kriss said. “Now that third bedroom is set as an office. Wherever there’s a nook or cranny, they’re showing a desk. I even put in monitors and keyboards.

“Low-interest rates (a 15-year fixed mortgage is currently below 2 percent) have created their own hyperactivity. Sellers can afford to charge more for their property. Sellers are fueled by prices and now prices are crazy high.” And what he terms “the 3 D’s” — death, divorce, dis-employment — continue to prime the real estate pump.

“What if one of us gets Covid?” was the reason Norm and Norma Bedford decided to sell the house they had lived in for 40 years and move back to Whidby Island, Washington, where they had raised their children. “We felt we needed to be near family,” she said a few months after moving.

Norma retired years ago from nursing, and Norm more recently retired as a professor at Saint Mary’s College of California. “If anything, we would have stayed in California,” she said. Although thankful that they are back in a familiar setting, they miss what Rockridge allowed them even during the pandemic: “Seeing people walk by.” ■



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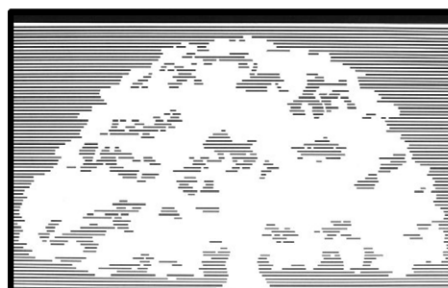
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## RLS, from front page

the stay-at-home order would last or how we'd operate upon returning," Gold recalls. "Some families were very supportive and wanted to help us keep our teachers on payroll. Others wanted Zoom instruction which we weren't prepared for. Everyone was stressed and scrambling to make alternate arrangements."

But Gold has persevered. Presently, Rockridge Little School (RLS) teaches about 50 kids, roughly half of the pre-COVID enrollment. The school's over-arching philosophy is that kids learn by doing. "We encourage kids to investigate, create and discover," Gold says. "We draw from different approaches — Montessori, Reggio-Emilia, Waldorf — we don't adhere rigidly to any single system."

Before she opened RLS, Gold worked in nonprofit management and in the daycare field — "before they called it preschool," she jokes. She also worked with homeless kids at the Larkin Street Youth Center in San Francisco and later served as executive director of Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

"I always loved working with kids, but in my administrative roles I wasn't really close enough to them," she recounts. "I knew I needed a change." Looking for support in her career transition, Gold was awarded a Eureka Fellowship for community leaders looking to expand their impact. Through this program, "I

came to see there were other ways to make a significant community impact outside of the nonprofit field." (The program is now known as LeaderSpring.)

Her eureka moment was the realization that she wanted to run her own preschool. So she set out to find a suitable facility and got a tip that space was available in the beautiful College Avenue church complex designed by Julia Morgan. "It was an empty room when we first saw it," she remembers, "but I saw the potential." In 2012, she took out a Small Business Administration loan to purchase what was previously the Rainbow School on Taft.

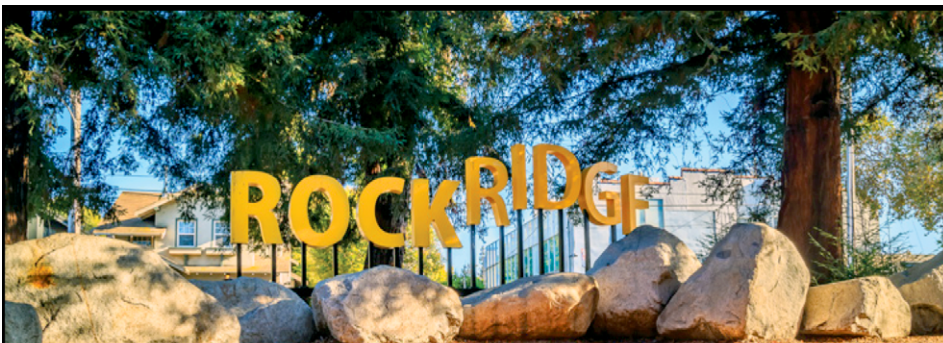
Just as COVID restrictions hit, Gold was finishing another ambitious renovation project on a third site. Adjacent to the Taft campus, the new property fronts on Broadway and it used to house the Musically Minded Academy. "It's such a great space that I wanted to share it with our whole community. I envisioned a gathering place for our neighborhood. I'd run the school in the back of the property to help fund it."

Gold refurbished the main space to include a kitchen, lounge areas, and meeting space. It has a distinctly modern, clubby feel. "Someday, we can host art shows, community meetings, receptions...we'll see."

To keep her vision alive while the community space sits idle, Gold created the Kindergarten Club to serve kids who were homeschooling. There are about a dozen kids and two teachers on site.

"This last year has been really tough," she says. "One of the hard parts is not being able to be with the kids. I can't read them stories or give them hugs. I need to stay around the edges for now. I do find hope in our kids. We've seen so many of them grow up and it's a thrill to hear of their accomplishments and successes. Rockridge is such a special place and I like to think we're part of that."

Visit [www.rockridgelittleschool.com](http://www.rockridgelittleschool.com) to learn more. Got a tip for Skip? Email [editor@rockridge.org](mailto:editor@rockridge.org). ■



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